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His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury's *Letter to the Right Reverend the Lords Bishops of his Province.*

To the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of *Exeter.*

Reverend Brother,

MY Writing to You and the rest of our Brethren at this time, is occasion'd by a sensible growth of Vice and Prophaneness in the Nation: which, to the great Affliction of all good Men, appears not only in the corrupt practices of *particular* persons; but also in the Endeavours that are used to subvert the *general* Principles of our holy Religion. And this with a boldness and openness, far beyond the examples of past times; so that if a speedy stop be not put to such *National* Provocations, we have just cause to fear they may bring down the heaviest Judgments of God upon Us; The preventing whereof belongs more immediately to us, who are the *Ministers of Christ*; and as such, are obliged to the utmost care and watchfulness in opposing these *Instruments of Satan.*

I doubt not, but many of the *Parochial Clergy* are sufficiently sensible both of their own duty and the danger we are in: In the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*, and other Places, I am sure the good Effects of their Diligence have been very evident of late Years. But in some Parts that are more remote, all of them may not so well understand either the *Arts* or the *Industry* of these E-nies of Religion: And therefore I thought it a Duty in-

cumbent on the Station wherein Providence has plac'd me, to desire of You and the rest of our Brethren, to warn the Clergy under your Care, of these attempts against Religion and Virtue; and to excite them to a Diligence proportionable to the Danger; and to suggest to them such Methods as are most likely to work a *General Reformation*.

With this request, I send You such Particulars as, in my Opinion, are very necessary to be pressed upon your Clergy for the attaining so desirable an End. As,

I. That in their own Lives, and the Government of their own Families, they would make themselves *Examples* of a sober and regular Conversation. It is the Apostles Reasoning, *If a Man know not how to rule his own house* (and much more *his own Life and Actions*) *how shall he take care of the Church of God?* The true method of working a Reformation *abroad*, is to lay the foundation *at home*: which alone can give our *Reproofs* a just Weight and Authority: but till that is done, no *Exhortations*, whether in publick or private, can either be offered with decency, or received with reverence.

II. To Piety, they should add *Prudence* in all their Actions and Behaviour: which even in *Private Christians* is a great Ornament to Religion; but in *Publick Teachers* is a most necessary qualification for the due discharge of their Ministry. A *Mildness* of temper, with a *Gravity* and *Calmness* in their Conversation, will not fail to gain them a general Love and Esteem among their Neighbours: and a discreet Caution in their *Words* and *Actions*, will preserve them from those little Imprudences that are sometimes so sensible an Obstruction to the good Endeavours of well-meaning Men. Persons in *Holy Orders* are not only bound, in the conduct of their Lives to consider what is lawful

unlawful *in it ſelf*, but alſo what is decent or indecent *in Them*, with reſpect to their *Character* and *Function: Abſtaining from all appearance of evil; and giving no Offence in any thing, that the Miniſtry be not blamed.*

III. While Our *Enemies* are ſo very induſtrious in ſeeking out Objections againſt the Chriſtian Religion; it becomes the *Clergy* (who are ſet apart for the Vindication of it) to be no leſs diligent in their Preparations for its Defence: By acquainting themſelves thorowly with the rational grounds of Chriſtianity, and the true State of ſuch Points as are the Subjects of our preſent Controverſies; together with the Objections which are uſually made by our Adverſaries of all ſorts, and the Effectual Anſwers that have been returned to them by ſo many Eminent Writers of our own Church: That ſo they may be ready, on all occaſions, to do Juſtice and Honour to our Religion; and be able to-expoſe the folly and ignorance of theſe Gain-ſaying Men. The Cauſe which God has put into our hands, is undoubtedly good; but the beſt cauſe may ſuffer by the weakneſs of its Advocate: and when this happens in the matter of Religion, it gives the Adverſary an occaſion of Triumph, and is apt to ſtagger the Faith even of ſincere and unprejudic'd Chriſtians.

IV. It were to be wiſht, that the Clergy of every Neighbourhood, would agree upon frequent *Meetings*, to conſult for the good of Religion in general, and to adviſe with one another about any difficulties that may happen in their particular Cures. By what Methods any Evil Cuſtom may moſt eaſily be broken; How a Sinner may be moſt effectually reclaimed; and (in general) How each of them in their ſeveral circumſtances may contribute moſt to the advancement of Religion. Such *Conſultations* theſe, beſides the mutual benefit of advice and inſtru-

ction, will be a natural means to excite the zeal of ſome, to reduce the over-eagerneſs of others to a due temper, and to provoke All to a Religious Emulation in the improvement of *Piety* and *Order* within their reſpective Pariſhes. And Theſe *Meetings* might ſtill be made a greater advantage to the Clergy in carrying on the *Reformation* of Mens *Lives* and *Manners*, by inviting the *Church-Wardens* of their ſeveral Pariſhes, and other pious Perſons among the *Laity*, to joyn with them in the Execution of the moſt probable methods that can be ſuggeſted for thoſe good Ends. And we may very reaſonably expect the happy Effects of ſuch a concurrence, from the Viſible Succeſs of that Noble Zeal wherewith ſo many about the great *Cities* in my Neighbourhood, do promote true Piety, and a *Reformation of Manners*. And therefore I deſire you that you will particularly excite your Clergy to the procuring ſuch aſſiſtances as theſe, for the more effectual diſcharge of their own duty.

V. It would very much further and facilitate all their Endeavours of this kind, to gain over the perſons who have the greateſt *Eſteem* and *Authority* in their Pariſhes, to a hearty concern for the honour of God and Religion: frequently ſuggeſting to them the Obligation that God has laid upon them to be *Examples* to others; and the great good that it is in their power to do, by ſetting a Pattern of *regular* living, and the unſpeakable miſchief of their *irregular* behaviour. For if once the better Sort can be brought to ſuch a Seriouſneſs and Sobriety, the reſt will more eaſily follow; *Example* being the moſt powerful Inſtruction; and Experience teaching us *that ſhame and fear*, which ariſe from the *Authority* of ſuch *good* Patterns, are commonly the moſt effectual reſtraints upon the meaner ſort.

VI. Where any Perſon is obſtinate in his Vices, and p-

to be reclaimed either by *Teaching* or *Example*, by *Exhortation* or *Reproof*; the *Ordinary* ought to be informed of it, that he may proceed to reclaim such by *Ecclesiastical Censures*: and where those are like to prove ineffectual, the *Civil Magistrate* must be applied to, and desired to proceed against them according to the *Laws* in those Cases provided. Which *Information* and *Request*, especially in the Case of such incorrigible Offenders, can be made by none so properly as by the *Clergy*; who may best be supposed to understand the necessity there is of having recourse to the Civil Magistrate. And since our *Law-givers* have Enacted these temporal Punishments, on purpose to assist us in the discharge of our Ministry; it would be a great failing in us, not to make use of them when all other Methods have been tried to little or no Effect.

VII. Every *Pious Person* of the Laity, should, if need be, be put in mind by the Clergy, that he ought to think himself obliged to use his best endeavours to have such Offenders punished by the *Civil Magistrate*, as can no otherwise be amended. And that when he hears his Neighbour *swear* or *blaspheme the Name of God*, or sees him offend in *drunkenness* or *prophanation of the Lord's Day*, he ought not to neglect to give the Magistrate Notice of it: In such a Case to be called an *Informer*, will be so far from making any Man Odious in the Judgment of Sober Persons, that it will tend to his honour, when he makes it appear by his unblamable behaviour, and the care he takes of *Himself* and his own *Family*, that he doth it purely for the *Glory of God*, and the *Good of his Brethren*. Such well disposed Persons as are resolved upon this, should be encouraged to meet as oft as they can, and to *consult* how *they may most discreetly and effectually manage It in the places where* [illegible]

VIII. As in reforming the *Laity*, they ought to uſe the Aſſiſtance of the *Civil Magiſtrate*; ſo if any of their own *Brethren* be an irregular Liver, and cannot be reclaimed by brotherly Admonition, the *neighbouring Clergy* ſhould be ſtrictly enjoyned to make it known to their *Diœceſan*, either by themſelves or the *Archdeacon*, or by ſome other convenient way. That ſo the Offender may be Admoniſht to live ſuitably to his Character; and if a bare Admonition will not do, he may be proceeded againſt by *Eccleſiaſtical Cenſures*; for the preventing ſuch *Scandals* and *Miſchiefs*, as will always accompany the irregular Life of a *Miniſter of the Goſpel*.

IX. And whereas the Foundations of *Piety* and *Morality* are beſt laid at the beginning, in the Religious Education of *Children*; I cannot but wiſh that every one of the *Parochial Clergy* would be very diligent in *Catechiſing* the Children under their Care; and not only ſo, but in calling upon them afterwards, as they grow up, to give ſuch further Accounts of their Religion, as may be expected from a riper Age. That being thus carefully inſtructed in the *Faith* and *Duty* of a Chriſtian, they alſo may teach their Children the ſame; and ſo *Piety*, *Virtue*, and *Goodneſs*, may for ever flouriſh in our Church and Nation.

Theſe Directions with ſuch others of the ſame nature as will occur to you, I deſire may be Tranſmitted by you to the Clergy of your Diœceſe; for the Religious Government of themſelves, and their People, in theſe dangerous Times. So commending you and them to the Bleſſing of God, I reſt

Lambeth, April 4th, 1699.

Your Affectionate Brother

Tho. Cant[illegible]

To the Reverend the Arch-Deacon of Exeter.

Reverend Brother,

HAving lately receiv'd a Letter from my Lord's Grace of *Canterbury*, with orders, that it ſhould be communicated to the Clergy of my Dioceſe; I have herewith ſent you as many Copies as will anſwer the number of the Incumbents in your Arch-Deaconry, that they may be carefully directed to them, according to your uſual manner.

I ſuppoſe His Grace cannot but believe, that we the Biſhops, and you in your Viſitations, have preſs'd moſt of theſe Duties on our Clergy already; I am ſure I have ſeveral times, but the great and daily encreaſe of Prophaneneſs and Irreligion, making thoſe Counſels now ſo highly *neceſſary* becauſe ſo *ſeaſonable*, it is to be hop'd, that where *our* Advices may prove *ineffectual*, His Grace's great Authority ſupervening, will be fully *prevalent*.

It is evident, the Evils of theſe Times make all Remedies requiſite, and call for all the joint Endeavours of the Clergy, from the higheſt to the loweſt, to ~~make~~ a Check to them. ~~And truly if the Civil Magiſtrate (as we may hope from His Grace's Letter)~~ will, when apply'd to, and deſired, as readily ~~give~~, his Aſſiſtance in Aid to our Duties, tho' then we may expect much *better* effects by ſuch a kindneſs, Yet it is to be fear'd, even theſe joint Endeavours will not do. For, till ſome effectual ſtop be put to the prevalency of ſo many *Horrid and Blaſphemous Poſitions*, daily obtaining among us by having their Looſneſs

authoritatively

authoritatively censured, and their Abettors *judicially* puniſh'd, we may juſtly apprehend by their natural *tendency*, that theſe villainous Opinions, not only deſtructive of the Fundamental *myſteries* of *Chriſtianity*, But the very notions of a *God*, and conſequently all the conſcientious ties of *Obedience to Governours*, will inſenſibly deſtroy the *true* Worſhip of God, and *true* Allegiance to the King and Government, and even the Senſe of common Goodneſs and Kindneſs due to each other.

But it being in the Power of the Clergy only to wiſh for ſuch an Amendment, not to amend it our ſelves; let us be ſure to do, in our *reſpective Subordinations*, all our Duties; you in diſperſing theſe Orders for the Clergy's [illegible]; and by aſſuring them, that where I find them not carefully obſerv'd, I will ſeverely Puniſh the *neglect* in my next Viſitation, which, by God's Bleſſing, I intend this Summer. In the mean while, and for ever, I recommend you to God's Love and Protection. I am

Exon. April the 14th, 1699.

Your very Affectionate Brother

Jonat. Exon.

EXON:

Printed by *Samuel Darker* and *Samuel Farley*, over-againſt St. *Paul's* Church, for *Charles Yeo*, Bookſeller in the *Fore-Street*. 1699.